10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

181 language and not much given to servility. Direct in his
152 speech and with his mind easily upset by panic and timi-
101 dity, he is often what we would call impolite and very undiplomatic. He makes no effort to show himself to his best advantage but has a sort of "take it or leave it" attitude that often gets him into trouble. This makes him all the more desirous of shunning those with whom he feels that he cannot compete. This is another reason why he sought the jungles and the hills.

153 Many early writers on the Karens have described them
● 528 as devoid of humour. This can easily be explained when one understands the fears with which they surrounded everything. They were struck with terror by Government officers and other aggressive Europeans, with their strange appearance and ways. They did not dare to laugh for they did not understand what was supposed to be a joke. Therefore they preserved poker faces and seemed dumb and dead. The writer has spent many hours with them when the flow of humour and the joyous laughter were as spontaneous and happy as among any people he was ever with. Stories, practical jokes, wise-cracks came as quickly and merrily as in any language. But a man must have their confidence and know their language if he would enjoy himself among them.

There is a naivety among the Karens that is often very refreshing. They do not seem to be able to plot involved schemes for deceiving their neighbours. When they do attempt such things their simple plots usually fail. There is a simplicity among them that makes one feel a genuine friendliness when with them. One is usually safe in leaving one's luggage in their houses. Pedlars most often sleep at Karen houses when they can, for they

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
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volves himself in serious difficulty, for his mistakes are easily detected.

Shyness, caution, and concealment are fruits of this trait of fear. I have often heard a veteran school-teacher remark that the Karen never puts his best foot foremost. In the past it was not safe for him to do so. Concealment was one of his natural means of protection. To show signs of prosperity or admit having possessions was only tempting his more powerful neighbors to come and dispossess him. I know of recent instances of persecution of one sort or another being visited upon certain Karen villages on account of their prosperous condition. In the days of the Ancient Regime the French peasantry simulated poverty, in order to protect their property from the tax-collector. The Karen has been preyed upon in various ways in earlier and later times, and in his fear and helplessness he has resorted to the method of the European peasant. Shyness and caution are marked traits of the Karen women even more than of the men. Indeed, I have seen all the inhabitants of a village run to the jungle when I came in sight. A group of girls out gathering firewood dropped their faggots and disappeared as fast as possible at the approach of my party along the path. In their attempts to hide their shyness, schoolgirls often succeed in attracting the attention they are trying to avoid.

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A leading authority on Burma has said that the Karen are "absolutely devoid of humor." [1] Having had years of experience as a missionary among these people, I may be allowed to differ from the opinion just quoted. The authority referred to was a high Government official, and I am quite sure that no Karen would be so self-forgetful as to risk offending the dignity of such a personage. One who has entered into intimate association with these people, has been entertained in their houses, and has sat beside their fireplaces will testify to their love of fun and their jolly laughter. For myself I ask for no lighter-hearted companions than those with whom I have traveled over the plains and hills, and whom I have met in distant villages. They are keen enough to see the humor in some of their folklore tales, in embarrassing situations, and in the little mishaps of daily life, and to laugh heartily when these are told. They are also capable of enjoying practical jokes. This is illustrated by the instance of a young man who by mistake shot a vulture, as it flew up out of the bushes, and decided to serve the

[1] Sir J. G. Scott, *Burma, A Handbook*, p. 120.

19; Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AFI Burma
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breast of the great bird, cooked with curry well spiced, to some of his chums. The flesh of the creature proved to be both tough and strong, and when one of the guests left the group to wash out his mouth, the host beat a hasty retreat. The other villagers, who promptly heard of the unpalatable feast, amused themselves by asking the guests how they enjoyed it.

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The Karen are accustomed to say of themselves that "they put a thing in the heart." They mean by this that they hold their peace, but do not forget slights, grudges, disagreeable requests, and the like. If a Karen is asked to do something he does not want to do, he may reply with a grunt suggesting an assent, but does not comply with the request and fails to put in an appearance again soon. He does not refuse at the time, fearing to cause trouble. In the same way a slight or an insult is "put in the heart" without retort or demonstration of anger. He dissimulates and waits for his revenge. Before the British established orderly government in the country, many a raid was executed to pay off a grudge or an insult cherished in the heart. For the man of little or no influence in his village there was a secret method of vengeance, namely, by resorting to magic or to poison. It was the fear of this vengeful trait in the Karen that for years prevented the Burman subordinate officials from crossing Thaukgeyat Creek into the Toungoo Hills.

The repudiation of a friend is not unknown among the Karen, but such conduct is rare. In general, they are cautious in entering into friendships, but, having done so, are faithful and sincere to those whose confidence they accept in exchange for their own. Blood-brotherhood is a recognized institution among them, having been much more prevalent in the past than at present; and the bond signified by it in most of the Karen tribes was stronger than the ties of family. Westerners make friends more quickly than the Karen, but Western haste and impatience are not winsome qualities to the latter. [608]

It has been said that the Karens are stubborn. They do not reach quick decisions in regard to matters novel to them and can not be forced to do so. But if given time to consider after a full explanation, they are pretty sure to return later and offer their reasons for not consenting to the proposition; and if allowed to talk the matter out, their objections being answered and time given for their consideration, they will most likely be persuaded. When thus convinced, their loyal coöperation may generally be de-